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ABSTRACT

Transitioning Vocational Services (TVS) meets the career exploration, training, and placement requirements of students with special needs in Illinois High School Districts 211 and 214. It serves students enrolled in special education who require assistance with the transition to postsecondary training and/or employment. TVS targets wards of the state, youth with limited proficiency in English, dropouts, and economically disadvantaged youth for transition-related assistance. TVS helps students with special needs target postsecondary goals through formalized transition planning. A three-level assessment format is used to determine individual vocational, career, and training needs. Students with goals to develop work behaviors essential to entry-level community employment may be referred to the TVS Transitional Lab, which provides students with a structured work experience before they attempt a competitive job within the community. In-school and community-based job training sites are tailored to individual interests and abilities in order to provide each student with concrete experiences upon which to base career decisions. TVS provides ongoing career guidance and counseling. Students considered ready for competitive employment receive job placement services throughout the year preceding graduation. TVS programs and services require ongoing communication and collaboration with community services, parents, businesses, and local adult service providers. (Contacts for further information are listed.) (YLB)

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TASPP BRIEF

Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program

Volume 3 Number 2

TRANSITIONING VOCATIONAL SERVICES: AN EXEMPLARY VOCATIONAL PROGRAM SERVING YOUTH WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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During 1991, the Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program (TASPP) conducted its second annual national search for vocational programs providing exemplary services to special populations. Five programs were identified as exemplary. This BRIEF highlights one of this year's awardees. Descriptions of other exemplary programs as well as information on the National Recognition Program are available from TASPP.

Transitioning Vocational Services (TVS) meets the career exploration, training, and placement requirements of students with special needs in Illinois High School Districts 211 and 214. Part of the Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization (NSSEO), TVS serves students enrolled in special education who require assistance with the transition to postsecondary training and/or employment. In addition, TVS targets wards of the state, youth with limited proficiency in English, dropouts, and economically disadvantaged youth for transition-related assistance.

Program Features

Formalized Transition Planning

TVS assists students with special needs to target postsecondary goals through formalized transition planning. Through this process, student goals and services necessary to achieving those goals are identified.

- *A Transition Planning Guide is used to identify goals* for postsecondary employment, education/training, living arrangements, and recreation/leisure activities.
- *An Individualized Transition Plan is developed* which pairs individuals to jobs or training experiences for which they are best suited based upon interests, physical abilities, education, and experience. Transition goals may target a variety of postsecondary options including: sheltered workshops, supported employment, competitive employment, competitive employment with adult agency support, trade school, vocational-technical school, two-year college, four-year college, and the military.
- *Students are referred to any of a range of services* available through NSSEO and TVS including vocational assessment and evaluation, job and work-related behavior training, and vocational counseling.

Vocational Evaluation and Assessment

TVS utilizes a three-level assessment format for determining individual vocational, career, and training needs.

Level I--Assessment: Informal review of currently available information (e.g., previous testing, case study evaluation, medical history, academic achievement, work history, and other vocationally relevant information) conducted by case managers and pre-vocational counselors within the school.

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Level II--Vocational Screening Assessment: Formal vocational testing (utilizing standardized assessment tools) conducted by teachers and counselors at the local high school.

Level III--Inclusive Vocational Assessment: Comprehensive vocational evaluation in which students participate in a simulated work setting for approximately a two-week session on a half-day basis. Conducted by specialists in vocational assessment at the NSSEO Vocational Assessment Center, the Level III assessment is tailored to the data required by the referral source and the student's availability. Information may be collected through the student's completion of work samples, and situational assessment of basic work aptitudes, work habits, and work temperaments.

Behavioral Work Adjustment Activity

Students with goals to develop work behaviors essential to entry-level community employment may be referred to the TVS Transitional Lab. The Transitional Lab provides students with a structured work experience prior to attempting a competitive job within the community. It is designed to reinforce appropriate work behaviors and entry-level job skills for those students who can attain or approach competitive employment standards within 9-18 weeks. Located at a local insurance company, the Lab trains students in various job tasks including filing, photocopying, collating, assembling manuals, affixing labels, and stuffing envelopes for large mailings. During training, student behaviors are assessed, and a program of remediation is developed using various counseling techniques and behavior contracts. Students are paid based upon their productivity. Upon successful completion of the lab, a student may be placed in a community job training site while still receiving support, encouragement, and behavioral management.

In-School/Community-Based Job Training

A wide variety of sites are used to expose students to the demands of competitive employment. In-school and community-based job training sites are tailored to individual interests and abilities in order to provide each student with concrete experiences upon which to base career decisions. Training activities focus on the employer as well as the student. Employer insight on procedures, responsibilities, and unique job aspects essential to job success is actively solicited.

- *Specific skill training* is available for industry, food service, hospitality, retail, health care, and clerical occupations. During the 1990-91 school year, extensive on-the-job training in food service and clerical/secretarial occupations was provided for 61 TVS students through contractual agreements with two insurance companies and a major national hotel.

- *Job coaches* are available for students who need temporary one-on-one supervised training and support services on job training sites or survival skill areas. Services from job coaches are provided to help students function effectively before asking on-site supervisors to assume full supervision. Job coach services may include one or more of the following:
  - mobility training,
  - assistance with community-based training curriculum units,
  - task analysis of job sites,
  - student work performance evaluation,
  - pre-employment skill instruction,
  - on-site job training, and
  - assistance with vocationally-related academic concepts.

Ongoing Career Guidance and Counseling

TVS provides ongoing counseling to assist students with work adjustment issues and the development of realistic career goals. Career guidance and counseling are available to program participants during their initial involvement in programs, as well as on an "as needed" basis. It is provided to individuals and groups and may involve consultation with parents and school staff. Students may also receive career guidance as part of a group visit to an employment site or postsecondary training program. Counseling staff include certified special education teachers, social workers, and rehabilitation counselors. Most have acquired pre-vocational teaching and administrative certificates.

Job Placement

Students considered ready for competitive employment recieve job placement services throughout the year preceding graduation. During this time, placement specialists work with employers, trade union representatives, parents, and teachers. Job placement specialist activities

include scheduling school tours so that employers can observe instruction and meet instructors and students, providing instruction in job seeking and job keeping skills, collaborating with employers to facilitate job adjustment, and conducting teacher inservices and workshops on identifying activities which support student adjustment to the work force.

PROGRAM OPERATION

SERVICE	STAFF
Vocational Assessment In-depth assessments using hands-on work samples, situational assessments, interest inventories, community-based career exploration visitations	**Three Vocational Assessment Specialists, Two Assistants, One Aide**
Transitional Lab Direction and training on appropriate work behaviors and attitudes	**One Facilitator, One Assistant**
Supportive Lab Specific training to increase student potential to be accepted into a supported employment program	**One Facilitator, One Assistant**
Office Skill Training Skill training and career exploration activities in a community-based (private business) settings	**One Facilitator**
Hotel/Recreation Skill Training Skill training and career exploration in a community-based setting (nation-wide hotel chain)	**One Facilitator, One Aide**
Transition Assistance Assistance with college applications, trade school applications, resumes, work applications, interviewing skills, and career awareness exercises	**One Facilitator, One Assistant, Two Aides**
Vocational Adjustment Counseling Vocational counseling, job placement, parent education, and collaboration with the private business sector	**Two Counselors, One Assistant, One Social Worker**
Community-Based Program Assistance Facilitation of functional curriculum implementation in junior high and high school programs and evaluation of student mastery of curriculum objectives in the community	**Three Aides**

Communication and Collaboration

TVS programs and services require ongoing communication and collaboration with community services, parents, businesses, and local adult service providers. Its continuum of services is maintained through collaborative activities with a variety of organizations including the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the local Private Industry Council, the District Cooperative Work Program, a local junior college, various adult service agencies, the Parent Illinois Transition Project, the Illinois State Board of Education, and a variety of local businesses.

Financial Support

TVS services are supported through a combination of local revenue, private sector contributions, and grant funds. During the 1990-91 school year, TVS services cost an estimated $911 per participant. The school districts and NSSEO provided less than half of these funds.

- Local Revenue (NSSEO and School Districts) 36%
- Off-Setting Revenue
  (private sector, federal grants, various grant resources) 64%

Under the direction of Technical Assistance Coordinators Kenneth Kozin and Don Minor, TVS has assisted hundreds of students in their transition from public school to community placement or postsecondary training. Since its inception in 1982, TVS services have evolved based upon yearly evaluations by a committee composed of representatives from NSSEO, member high school districts, parents, adult service providers, and the local business community. Throughout, its focus has been to promote successful transition by meeting the individual needs of each student as well as those of local businesses.

For additional information on TVS contact Ken Kozin or Don Minor, Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization, 799 W. Kensington Road, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056, (708) 577-7749.

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TASPP BRIEF
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The Technical Assistance for Special Populations Program of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, Berkeley, is housed at the University of Illinois. Under the direction of Dr. Carolyn Maddy-Bernstein, TASPP produces materials, responds to inquiries about vocational programs for special groups, and provides an array of services for professionals serving special populations in vocational education.

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